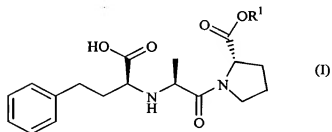


IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Original): A proline ester represented by the following formula (I):



wherein R¹ represents a hydroxy-lower alkyl group, a lower alkoxy-lower alkyl group, or a lower alkoxy-lower alkoxy-lower alkyl group or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

Claim 2 (Original): The proline ester as described in claim 1, which is selected from the group consisting of 1-[N-[(1S)-1-Carboxy-3-phenylpropyl]-L-alanyl]-L-proline 2-hydroxyethyl ester, 1-[N-[(1S)-1-Carboxy-3-phenylpropyl]-L-alanyl]-L-proline 3-hydroxypropyl ester, 1-[N-[(1S)-1-Carboxy-3-phenylpropyl]-L-alanyl]-L-proline 4-hydroxybutyl ester, 1-[N-[(1S)-1-Carboxy-3-phenylpropyl]-L-alanyl]-L-proline 2-(2-methoxyethoxy)ethyl ester, and 1-[N-[(1S)-1-Carboxy-3-phenylpropyl]-L-alanyl]-L-proline 2-methoxyethyl ester, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

Claim 3 (Previously Presented): A drug comprising a proline ester as recited in claim 1 or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

Claim 4 (Previously Presented): A percutaneous preparation comprising a proline ester as recited in claim 1 or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

Claim 5 (Original): The percutaneous preparation as described in claim 4, which is a patch.

Claim 6 (Previously Presented): The percutaneous preparation as described in claim 4, which comprises one or more percutaneous absorption enhancers selected from the group consisting of a fatty acid ester and a non-ionic surfactant.

Claim 7 (Original): The percutaneous preparation as described in claim 6, wherein the percutaneous absorption enhancer is selected from the group consisting of isopropyl myristate, lauromacrogol, lauric acid diethanolamide, glyceryl monocaprylate, glyceryl monolaurate, sorbitan monocaprylate, and polyoxyethylene sorbitan monooleate.

Claims 8-10 (Cancelled)

Claim 11 (Currently Amended): A method for treating a pathological condition affected or induced by activation of an ACE comprising:

administering to a subject in need thereof an effective amount of a proline ester of claim 1 or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof;

wherein the pathological condition is selected from the group consisting of hypertension, a cardiac disease, nephritis, apoplexy, cardiac hypertrophy, cardiac failure, and myocardial infarct.

Claim 12 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 11, wherein administration is performed percutaneously.

Claim 13 (Previously Presented): The method of Claim 11, wherein the pathological condition is selected from the group consisting of hypertension, a cardiac disease, nephritis, and apoplexy.

Claim 14 (Previously Presented): The method of Claim 11, wherein the pathological condition is cardiac hypertrophy, cardiac failure, or myocardial infarct.

Claim 15 (New): The proline ester of Claim 1, wherein R^1 represents a hydroxy-lower alkyl group.

Claim 16 (New): The proline ester of Claim 1, wherein R^1 represents a lower alkoxy-lower alkyl group.

Claim 17 (New): The proline ester of Claim 1, wherein R^1 represents a lower alkoxy-lower alkoxy-lower alkyl group.